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A WINTER IN ALGIERS

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY W. M. BERGER, AFTER PHOTOGRAPHS

Villa Descamps,
Mustapha Supérieur, Alger.
December 25th, 1919.

CHRISTMAS DAY in Africa! and what a dream of beauty and color, blue sea, blue sky, groves of eucalyptus and olive trees, climbing roses, white-robed Arab women closely veiled, their eyes only showing, bare brown legs and feet, sometimes a silver bracelet on one leg, donkey boys with a nondescript flowing garment, a red fez on their heads; color everywhere. Our villa is charming, stands in a little wood of eucalyptus-trees, with a big garden, balconies, terraces, and marble steps, large high rooms and lovely views on all sides. It is quite in the country, five or six kilometres from Alger, very high up in the hills. Very few people live in the town, and the whole hillside is studded with villas, Moorish almost all, dazzlingly white, flat roofs and narrow windows. Quite at the top, where we are, there are some very comfortable eastern modern houses. I am writing at my window, which gives on a terrace, from which there is a divine view of the sea and the snow mountains of the Djurjura, miles away in Kabylie, and from one corner through the faded drooping leaves of the eucalyptus I have a glimpse of the town of Alger, lying a long white streak far below.

The drawing-room is a delightful room: runs all the width of the house, with windows on three sides, so that we always have the sun. The furniture is sketchy, not much of it, and what there is is very ugly, but when the Paris cases arrive, with a few tables and chairs and silver, the room will look very different. There are some carpets in the house which are absolutely necessary, as all the floors are tiled. However, Charlotte has done wonders with the meagre material she had.

We had rather a rough crossing from Marseilles. The boat, a good one, rolled a good deal, and passengers and chairs and valises slipped about the deck in an uncomfortable way. Our chairs were tied, so we managed pretty well. It was a real "mistral," beautiful as a sight, clear deep blue sky without a cloud, and equally blue sea, cut at intervals by short white rollers coming in every direction. None of us were sick; Mme. S. and I with three other ladies, the only ones who appeared at dinner. The service was difficult, and notwithstanding the racks on the tables, plates and glasses were sliding off and there were fine crashes of broken pottery. It was dark when we got to Alger, but the long, low line of lights of the town was most picturesque. The landing was long and difficult, the pontoons had been swept away by the gale, and we went down the narrow, steep ladder into a crowd of swarthy, gesticulating, chattering Arabs, standing on what looked like loose planks floating vaguely about. I should never have got down, but J. S. took me round the waist and deposited me on the quay. Every one was pushing and shouting, children screaming. I was sorry for one poor baby who was carried off in the arms of an Arab screaming and kicking with fright. The mother was alone with various bags and wraps, and the porter picked up the child quite naturally, as he would have taken a valise. Francis was waiting for us with a motor, J. also for Mme. S., and a drive of about twenty minutes up the hill brought us to the house. They had been rather anxious, as they felt the mistral and were quite sure we were being well shaken. It is too soon to have an impression, but so far the climate is divine. We live with open doors and windows—always a fire in the drawing-room and a very good stove in the hall, which heats the staircase and up-stairs rooms.

To-day the house is deserted; every

Waddington, M. K.

one but me has gone to church. The English service has not yet begun and the Catholic chapel of Sainte Marie Mustapha (I love the combination) is a little far: one has to go down a flight of steps, some of them quite gone, which are rather difficult to negotiate. It is certainly the first time in my life that I have not been to church on Christmas Day, but then it is the first Christmas I have spent in Africa. The boys and I will sing "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" this evening; that will be something of the old Christmas. We shall be a family party; it is the first Christmas since the War that we have all been together, and oh! such a blessed relief not to have to drink the health of "our men at the front." The Sallandrouzes, who have a charming little Arab house not far off, come to dine. Marie has made an excellent plum pudding and our African Christmas promises to be a success.

Monday 29th.

The days pass in a glory of sunshine and color and roses. It is not warm, a pleasant little crisp in the air. I always wear my winter costume with a fur collar; I don't suppose the fur cloak will ever go on unless we make an excursion in a open motor to the "Glacières." The first thing in the morning I am on my terrace, breathing the delicious air—a combination of sea and eucalyptus—and we are in and out of the house twenty times a day. Charlotte and I made an expedition to Alger the other day to find little presents and, we hoped, shining ornaments for her Christmas-tree which we had yesterday, but though the shops looked tempting they have very little to sell. The streets were crowded, not such a motley crowd as in the Cannebière at Marseilles, which was extraordinary—every uniform and language under the sun and everybody in a hurry. Here the crowd is much quieter. The Arabs, even in the humbler classes, move slowly with a certain dignity. The men are usually tall with oval faces, clear-cut features, and steady brown eyes.

The Christmas-tree went off very well. It was very difficult to dress, as the pine was decidedly a Southern pine, the branches soft and drooping; nothing would hold on them, candles were almost impossible to put on, but the boys arranged some electric lights hidden in the leaves and the effect was very good. There were about fifty people, children and grown-ups (I don't realize them all), the admiral commanding the port, with his wife and daughter, and various notabilities of the town. There is a very pleasant society in Alger, as there is a large military force here—General Nivelle, ex-generalissimo, in command. After the distribution of presents the children danced, ending with a "Sir Roger de Coverley," led with much entrain by Nanette (Jean's wife). As the drawing-room is large with very little furniture, there was plenty of room for the young ones to gallop about.

I had my first experience of a meal in an Algerian establishment the other day. Madame is a French Algerian, born here, her husband a Frenchman, one of the leading men in Alger. They have a lovely place some little distance from here on the other side of the mountain. They asked us all five Waddingtons and four Sallandrouzes most hospitably to lunch. The house is a large Arab house with inner courts, columns, stone archways very elaborately carved, and with every modern comfort, open fireplaces, electric light, splendid carpets, and a magnificent view of sea and town. The lunch was very well served by two Spanish girls, who looked very smart in their black dresses and white aprons with handsome embroidery. It seems it is very difficult to find servants here, hardly any Arab women are allowed to take service in a foreign house; some will come in the morning for a few hours, but they will never stay after dark, particularly with people who live far from the town, up in the hills, as we do; neither will they sleep. Of course there are exceptions—Jean's wife, who has lived here for two or three years has had all sorts of amusing experiences. She had an excellent Arab cook one year, not very young, who went all about the town doing her marketing dressed like all the other women, face uncovered, nothing on her head, not troubling herself about any men she met; but one day in the week, Friday, the Arab Sunday, she put herself into costume, full baggy trousers, white draperies and veil covering her face, ex-

Alger.—The Rue Arabe.

The streets interest me enormously, one sees so many things one has read of in all stories of Eastern life.—Page 684.

cept her eyes, and took herself off to the Kasbah, the old Arab town. There are a certain number of Spanish women here, and they make very good servants.

After lunch we walked about the garden, which is enchanting, marble terraces, steps, arches, flowers everywhere, and the most divine view. I have never seen anything like the gardens here, everything seems to grow—trees, bushes, flowers—naturally as if they could not help themselves, must open and blossom in the sun. It is certainly a delicious climate. I can understand, even after ten days here, what so many French officers have told me of their homesickness for Alger. It is funny to see our cook (who is a typical specimen of the peasant of the north of France—tall, strong, fair, accustomed to hard work and outdoor life) in Mustapha. This morning she was discussing with the old Arab who brings us vegetables. He comes with his donkey so heavily laden that one wonders how he ever gets up the steep paths. He is a nice-looking old man, with a long beard, a flowing blue garment, and a red turban bordered with white. He looks very patriarchal, just like the pictures in the Bible story-books. I believe he is fairly honest but they haggle over a sou.

The expeditions to Alger are rather long—it takes quite three-quarters of an hour to get down into the main street where all the shops are. I have only been down twice since I have been here, but I must say the streets interest me enormously, one sees so many things one has read of in all stories of Eastern life. The other day half a dozen men were sitting at a café having their shoes cleaned—a little Arab with his red cap on his head kneeling in front of each man scrubbing and polishing hard. It seems they do their work very well for a few sous. The Arab women all look alike and rather picturesque, but the rest of the female population, a medley of Spaniards, Maltese, a few Italians and Jews, is less interesting.

The Algerian lady never walks, at least in the town, occasionally in her garden. They are astounded at the way English and American women walk about the streets, and in the country up and down slippery, treacherous paths. New Year's day there was a reception at the Admiralty to which the F.'s and the J.'s went! Nothing at the palace, as the governor is in France accompanying M. Clemenceau in his triumphal progress in the war. So far he has been here very little; people seem to think he won't stay long. If (there are so many ifs in a presidential election) Clemenceau is slated President of the Republic he may want to have the governor near him, as they are great friends. We get our papers two or three at a time, about twice a week, three times sometimes when the steamers make fast trips, so we are dependent for news on the *Dépêche Algérienne* or the *Echo d'Alger*. They have of course all the telegrams, and sometimes a good leading article, but I miss the Paris papers (even the *Herald*) with the news and gossip of the outside world, a little stale perhaps when they arrive but giving glimpses of the world I have always lived in, half political, half social, telling what the Parisians are doing. I feel very far away; perhaps that feeling will pass, when I have been here longer and get more accustomed to my new surroundings.

Wednesday, January 6th.

We have had an enchanting day and have not been in the house except to eat and sleep. Jean came to get Charlotte and me this morning in the auto, and we had a lovely turn through the hills to El Biar, one of the neighboring villages, to the property of the Prince d'Annam. It is beautifully situated on the top of a hill looking down on the sea and the great plain of the Mitidja, where so many fortunes have been made. The plain is covered with vines. The Algerian wine is good and sells very well. The house, a regular white Moorish house, low, square, with narrow windows and a flat roof, stands at the end of a fine avenue of palms and India-rubber trees and cactus and mimosas, all the exotic plants we see in greenhouses in the north. He has a curious story—this Prince, of Imperial Annamite stock, exiled from his own country when he was five years old; a prisoner, practically, in Algeria, which he can never leave without permission of the French Government. He has a fair fortune, married a Frenchwoman, and has

three children, a son and two daughters. The girls are brought up like any French girls, but the son, who might perhaps one day become Emperor of Annam, and who is the hope of the party to which his father belongs, is brought up entirely as a royal Prince of Annam. If he were in his own country he would be Emperor and is considered so by some of his people. They live in a certain style, give dinners and garden-parties in the spring. All his servants are Annamite court servants, but they are only allowed to stay one year for fear of plots and disaffections; every year a new lot comes. For the last few years the French Government has been more tolerant and the prince went to France as often as he liked, merely notifying the authorities that he was going. During the war he was not allowed to leave Alger. It seems he is quite a philosopher, accepts the inevitable (perhaps because he has never known anything else), and speaks of himself as "un petit bourgeois d'El Biar." We came back through one of the Arab quarters, down steep twisting roads, and why we didn't run over some of the dogs and children sprawling in the middle of the street I don't understand. We passed a mosque where a number of dirty old men were sitting on the ground leaning against the wall, or on the curb-stones in full sun. Others were at work in the doorway of their dark low shops, these principally cobblers. A good many women were in the crowd, some selling oranges and mandarins spread out on the pavement or on a bit of carpet; some very stout ladies attired in loose peignoirs and red and yellow handkerchiefs on their heads, loitering along, looking at everything, talking, but never very loud—little cackling noises like hens. A divine view of the deep-blue sea at every turn. We passed through one or two Jewish streets. One sees at once the difference of nationality—the men haven't the erect—what shall I say?—stand-off carriage of the Arabs.

We passed under the walls of the old palace of the Dey of Alger, close under the famous room where Hussein the last Dey gave a "Coup d'éventail" to the French Consul which settled the fate of Alger and gave France her finest colony.

We drove a little about the town, as J. and C. had various things to do. I waited some little time before the post-office, close to the quay, while J. was sending a telegram and two or three little "bicos" (Arab boys) came up smiling and eager "moi garder voiture, madame." There are always a certain number about in the business parts of the city who take care of the auto when the master is busy. Nearly all the men are their own chauffeurs, and it is convenient to have one's car watched when there is nobody on it, as even in the daytime in a lonely quarter an Arab will steal a few small things. We came home through the bois de Boulogne —a lovely turn, the sea on one side, on the other a deep green ravine which is resting to the eyes.

The beautiful weather lasts. When my shutters are open in the morning about 7 o'clock I see from my bed an infinite space of blue and pink sky and blue sea: when there is any wind the branches of the eucalyptus with their strange, almost white weathered leaves blow across the panes like phantom branches. I wonder sometimes where I am. We went to tea yesterday with Countess de Brazza, who has lived here ever since her husband's death. Count de Brazza was the great African explorer of Congo celebrity —Italian born, but naturalized French, as the Italians would do nothing for him, and the French supplied him with men and money for his mission. She says, like so many people who have lived in Africa, that she could not live anywhere else. An interesting Frenchman, Count de C., was there. He too had the love of Africa, but a much wilder and more distant Africa than Alger. He has lived for years in Abyssinia, his wife with him, and says the climate is divine, the healthiest in the world, and life easy and pleasant in Djibouti, the chief town of Abyssinia.

Another beautiful warm bright day and as usual we have been out all day. The streets have an extraordinary interest for me, there is always something to see. C. and I went down-town this morning and stopped at the little French chapel Ste. Marie de Mustapha, which is really the inside court of an ancient Arab house, a square enclosure with columns and arcades all around it. On the hanging chandeliers there are still the cres-

cents. As we were coming out we saw a pretty little white camel coming along, a man who looked like an Englishman, with a long fair beard and loose tweed clothes, riding him. They were trotting along quite quietly. The gait did not look uncomfortable—a sort of long trot. It was the first camel I had seen. People here told me I would see no Bedouins nor camels in Alger; one must go much farther south, almost to the desert, to see them. We saw too what I suppose was an Arab couple, the man walking proudly in front, the woman behind. She was much better dressed than the ordinary Arab woman one meets walking about the streets. She was closely veiled, but her draperies and veil were in silk and she had on shoes and stockings.

12th.

To-day we have celebrated the seventeenth anniversary of the F.'s wedding. We all went to lunch at a restaurant on the quay, famous for its "bouillabaisse" and fish generally. There were a great many people in the Place de Gouvernement which we have to cross to get to the quay, always the same motley crowd—Arabs, Algerians, Turks, Jews, very smart French officers, Spahis, donkey-boys, bands of bright-eyed little bicos ready for any job—keep your auto, polish your shoes, carry your parcels, anything in fact. Nobody in a hurry, nobody jostling or pushing, a most easy-going leisurely crowd, the Arab element predominating, as it is practically their quarter. Veiled women were walking about, some with their babies wrapped in white woollen blankets tied on their backs, some of the young ones carrying themselves very straight with vases and trays on their heads, moving easily and lightly through the crowd. The restaurant is quite primitive, really a dark shed opening on the quay, but to-day floods of sunshine were steaming in through the open doors. The place was crowded, but F. and Captain D. were waiting for us and had secured a table. We had an excellent lunch, the "bouillabaisse" quite up to its reputation. Various wandering musicians with mandolins and violins came along and played and sang at the door. It was a most intimate meal, every one talking to the proprietor.

The young captain was most interesting, had been through the war, ending as aviator pilot in the Sahara. He told us of a descent in the desert with a broken machine, not knowing where they were and no means of finding out, in a blinding sand-storm which hid everything. They struggled on over hills of sand with burning eyes and blistered feet until they got to the post happily not far off. He told it all very simply quite as if it was an everyday occurrence. He wants to try it again, has the fever of the desert that so many of them get.

The boys were fascinated, hung upon his words; so was the proprietor, who came and stood at the table and told us of the horrors he had seen in the trenches and mud of Flanders. Francis too told some stories of a shell-swept bridge which he often crossed when he was carrying despatches in Champagne. They all fought their battles over again. We have fallen back so entirely (I can't say into our old life again, for that will never come back, but into a sort of normal life, accepting the inevitable and the unrest of the whole world), that memories of the tragic war years seem already part of an almost forgotten past.

We all separated after lunch, the two men went back to their offices, the boys to the lycée, and C. and I walked along the quay, busy enough but nothing like what it was before the war. Trade comes back very slowly, the transport question is always a difficult one, and prices go up every week. The most ordinary necessities of life—butter, eggs, vegetables—are very dear, cost almost four times as much as in ordinary times. We shall soon be obliged to live like the natives on rice and dates.

Sunday 18th.

Still the same warm bright weather, I walked down to the English church, where it is always cold, one feels the chill coming in from the warm air outside. It is a very big, white Moorish building, does not look in the least like a church; but there is plenty of room and the service very well done. The choir, a mixture of men's and women's voices, is very good. Captain D. came to lunch and we spent the whole afternoon in the garden. We had a good many people for tea. We are

A young Moorish woman.

The Arab women all look alike and rather picturesque.—Page 684.

much disappointed over the presidential election, as, like every one else, we could not believe that any one would stand against Clemenceau; as long as the old man wanted the presidency the country owed it to him. When one thinks of his age and his indomitable spirit, never sparing himself, his only idea to lead the armies to victory, it is impossible to understand the vote of the Congress and such ingratitude from the country. I wonder why politics always brings out the small side of men's characters; but it is the history of the world.

The sunset was beautiful to-night, the sea had those green streaks one only sees in the Mediterranean. We begin our days early; at half past six o'clock the household is awake and stirring. The first thing I hear is the boys running out of the gate and galloping down the steep path leading to the tram which they take every day for the lycée; a little later comes Francis, who likes to be at his office early—all work begins early in Alger. Then I see C. in the garden, with a broad-brimmed hat, basket, and scissors, trimming, clipping, watering, planting—quite hard work but she likes it. The flowers are all out, the climbing white roses gradually getting up to my balcony; and a pretty red flower, something between a salvia and a fuchsia, with thick green leaves like little palms, is coming beautifully behind the garden wall, making a screen between the road and us. It is practically a private road, rough and stony so that very little passes except the donkey bringing the vegetables from the town, and occasional English tourists taking their morning walk in the hills. Just now a troop of spahis galloped past, their cloaks floating out like flags in the wind. They generally ride gray, almost white horses and with their white turbans and red cloaks they made a beautiful streak of color as they disappear between the lines of olive-trees and tall eucalyptus. They were led by an officer dressed in khaki, very dark—I should have said he was black, but I am told here that the Arabs are white, but bronzed by the sun. I don't feel as if they were white like me, but perhaps that is a northern prejudice against anything off color.

The dew is extraordinarily heavy in this country. It lies so thick on the leaves even at ten o'clock in the morning, when the sun is well up, that it looks like crystal drops which one could take up in one's hand. I met a curious bit of color when I was walking this morning, in the shape of an Arab girl who stood out vividly between the gray-green olive-trees and cactus that border the narrow path. She was about fifteen years old, dressed in baggy trousers (bare legs and feet) of a bright red-figured pattern. On her head a large square of the same stuff as a veil, but her face uncovered, her straight black hair hanging down over a wonderful white jacket too small for her, showing a great expanse of brown neck; even Zacky the terrier, who is now an old inhabitant, barked and ran round her. She made a remark to me in an utterly unknown language and ran off, laughing, showing her very white teeth, saying "Bonjour, madame."

There are some charming places up here in the hills, Moorish houses and gardens with Anglo-Saxon taste and culture grafted upon the rather crude original building. We went to tea to-day with M. and Mrs. S., who have lived here for years. They have a delightful house and garden in a village the other side of the mountain. The story runs that they came to Alger on their wedding-trip and were so fascinated with the place that they never went back to America to live. The report may be a little exaggerated, but it is true that they have lived here for years. It was too late to see the garden, which must be lovely, but the house has kept its Moorish characteristics, with inner courts, walled gardens, narrow doors and windows. The living-rooms are most comfortable. Mrs. S.'s drawing-room, which they built, would be a delightful room in any American or English house; yet one feels very far from the Western world. We were a small party, very cosmopolitan, but no Arabs. J. brought us home in his motor. It was wonderful, the 20th of January, to feel the soft warm air and to see the beautiful blue sky of the African night, thousands of stars, so much nearer than they ever seem in our gray northern skies.

The days continue bright and warm and are very resting. I have never been in such a quiet place—we are so high that we don't hear any sounds from the town

except the long strident whistle when the steamers leave or arrive. I am getting to know the different whistles, particularly the "Adieux à la terre" when the boats go out. The service is getting more regular, there are almost always three steamers a week each way. I went to lunch with some English friends at the Hotel St. George on Tuesday. The dining-room was full of people, principally English, all sorts and types. We sat on the terrace for coffee and it was really too warm. I am still wearing my winter garments, but a great many people walk about in white serge. My hostess, Lady K., was in a foulard, didn't even put on a light wrap to sit outside. After lunch I walked across to J's., where we had very good music, not more then ten people, all musical and appreciative; just light enough for the musicians to see their notes, and the most lovely sunset view on the sea, the colors too beautiful; it certainly is a dream of colors and clear atmosphere. This morning C. and I have lounged about the garden doing nothing but looking at the flowers. It is a lazy life; when the days get warmer I am sure we shall be like the Arab women, wear loose white garments and sit—I don't like to say "squat"—in the shade of the wall.

Yesterday C. and I and Mme. S. went down to Alger. The two ladies had shopping to do. The shops are really good, but very dear. The grande rue amuses me always; everybody and everything passes in it. We saw an Arab, a tall handsome man with a keen clever face, wearing a black burnoose, red turban, white veil or cowl, drawn tight on each side of his face. He wore glasses and looked as if he might be a professor or a doctor; another one in white, also tall, rather fierce-looking, walking proudly along with three little white-veiled women behind him. In this country the man always walks ahead alone, his womenfolks following; and, though he doesn't seem to know what they are doing, any adventurous young foreigner who tried to get a word or a smile from one of the ladies would have had an uncomfortable surprise. In one of the most crowded parts of the street a procession of Arabs, mounted on small fat donkeys carrying bags of provisions, was crossing very leisurely with an absolute indifference to the trams and touring-motors. The Arabs are the terror of all the men who drive their motors; they never get out of the way no matter how much one blows the horn and there is nothing to do but to wait until they get across the street. I saw too the Englishman (who I think is a Frenchman) trotting along on his nice well-groomed camel. A girl passed close to me dressed in a pink-and-white cotton dress with a pink silk sash, a pink bow in her hair, which was very elaborately dressed, bare legs and feet. No one looked at her, no one seems to look at anything in this country; I suppose they have seen so many specimens of all nationalities, civilized and barbarous, that nothing surprises them.

March 4th.

The town is very animated since yesterday morning, when the English fleet came in, dreadnoughts, cruisers, destroyers. The admiral's ship, *Queen Elizabeth*, of historic notoriety, as she was in the Dardanelles, lies in the harbor alongside the quay, but the three other big ironclads are just outside. Guns were going all day, with the various salutes, and when we passed the governor-general's palace the gates were open and a line of spahis, in their red cloaks and white turbans, drawn up on each side of the entrance. I suppose the admiral, Sir C. Madden, was coming to pay his respects to the governor.

This afternoon we went down to Alger, which was crowded with British sailors in the cafés, in the shops, at the pâtisseries, who will do a flourishing business these days. All sorts of festivities are announced—balls and receptions at the Admiralty, the governor's palace, and on the admiral's flag-ship. Mme. S. and I stood for a long time on the promenade looking at the little boats going between the quay and the ships. They certainly give a great impression of strength and power, but the shapeless gray monsters are not beautiful. It seems the native population was much impressed, when the cannon were going, for the salutes from the English ships, answered by the small cannon in the port of the admiralty. They remarked "Canon An-

glais fait plus de bruit que Canon Français." (The English cannon makes more noise then the French cannon.)

We stopped at the Mosquée on our way back. I had not been there yet. We did not go far into the church, as it was holy building. Several men were praying on their little squares of carpet near us, sometimes standing with their hands raised high over their heads, then suddenly dropping in a heap on the ground motionless, their foreheads nearly touching

A young Arab.

They are a curiously self-contained race. . . . One fancies that their reserve is intended as an eternal protestation of the conquered race.

late, and also we did not want to put on the wonderful slippers (happily over our shoes) that the people shuffle about in, but we saw quite well from the bottom of the church. A wooden screen stood near the door, and from behind it we heard splashing and noise of running water. The Arabs must wash face, hands and feet before they penetrate into the the floor of the mosque, their lips moving. We heard a faint murmur but no distinct sound. They were perfectly absorbed in their prayers, didn't look round or pay any attention to us. They are a curiously self-contained race; I wonder if they think about anything; one rarely sees a trace of emotion of any kind on their impassive faces, yet they don't look insig-

nificant. One fancies that their reserve is intended as an eternal protestation of the conquered race. Are they conquered or even assimilated? They live apart, mix rarely with the French or Algerians, keep their own customs. Many of them of all classes, particularly in this last war, have served in France and done brilliant service. One sees a great many native soldiers in the streets of Alger with the Croix de Guerre and the Légion d'Honneur. Some of the chiefs educated at St.-Cyr are practically French officers, speak French without accent, dress like Europeans, but when they get back to Alger they fall at once into the old life, live on their estates, only come occasionally to Alger. Some of them have fine properties in the South, in the desert even, and receive Europeans who are travelling in that part of the country, but who even then never penetrate into the domestic life of their hosts. In some cases a wing is arranged quite like a European house—bathroom, electric light, and modern French furniture, and that is reserved for stranger guests. They are almost all married, but never speak of their wives, and no foreigner ever sees them except on very rare occasions when some distinguished foreign woman visits a harem. When two Arabs meet after an absence they will talk about everything—their business, their crops, their workmen—but neither one will ask about his friend's wife—she doesn't exist outside of the harem. When the men are real friends they walk about holding each other's hands, sometimes only holding by the little finger.

I often talk with the old residents here (after all, the conquest only dates back ninety years) about the relations between Arabs and French, and they all tell me that the Arabs are hostile to the French, yet the French domination in reality is not cruel nor tyrannical. They don't interfere with the customs nor the religion, nor the daily life of the natives: they brought an enormous amount of money into the country, draining and improving the soil, employing the natives, teaching them how to handle agricultural machines, and in some cases building houses, which the natives refuse to live in; but Algeria is now a French province and must be administered like other French departments, with all the precision and detail that accompany official life in France.

One thing they resent absolutely is the census. They feel as if strangers were preying into their affairs. When the official comes to the Arab hut to know how his household is composed and how many children he has, he never tells the truth. If an Arab has six children, four boys and two girls, he only declares four—girls don't exist. The hostility shows itself in many ways of doing things, also the desire to keep their own customs.

March 24th.

The British have gone and one quite misses the groups of boys (for they all looked like boys) that were swarming in the streets so excited and eager to see all they could. The ball at the admiralty was very well done, the British admiral dancing and enjoying himself very much. The reception at the governor's palace was a little spoiled by the weather. It was showery and the people could not walk about in the gardens, which are lovely, but there was a great show of uniforms and many Arab chiefs looking stately and imposing in their rich draperies and turbans. They don't wear any jewels, unlike the Indian princes who are always covered with them on state occasions, enormous stones but badly cut and badly set so that they don't make the effect they should. The ball on the *Queen Elizabeth* was most brilliant though the night was anything but tempting; it blew and rained up here, and the prospect of a drive of six kilometres in a half-closed automobile for the pleasure of dancing on the deck of a big ship shut in with canvas was not altogether alluring; however, some of the party went and said it was a pretty sight. The ship was brilliantly lighted, two or three bands of music, most abundant supper and floods of champagne; place in the admiral's apartment for the notabilities—governor-general, general commanding the French Corps d'Armée, Prince of Annam (and funny they said he looked, dressed in black silk with a white turban and a chignon). The non-dancing ladies kept on their cloaks and remained downstairs, but all the young ones, with their low dresses, were dancing hard on the deck.

Why they are not all dead of pneumonia I don't know, but I suppose the exercise and excitement kept them warm. They said the deck was dry and the canvas a sufficient protection against the wind and occasional showers.

March 28th.

We went to tea yesterday at a farm belonging to one of the rich Algerians who has made a fortune in wine. He owns acres of vines in the famous Mitidja plains, probably the most fruitful in the world. We were invited to spend the afternoon, and pick as many lemons and oranges as we liked. Unfortunately the day was gray, one of the very few we have had, with an occasional shower, but we decided to go in spite of the weather. The place is on the outskirts of a village on the other side of the mountain. The approach by an avenue of palms is charming. We passed through one court where there were farm buildings and implements and some animals—horses, goats, and of course donkeys (they drink a great deal of goat's milk in this country); then into another where are the house and garden, a square white, red-roofed Arab house, very comfortable, and an immense garden. There were quantities of flowers, roses, violets, a hedge of pink geraniums, and on one side an avenue of mimosas in full bloom looking like walls of gold against the dark sky, quantities of orange and lemon trees loaded with fruit. The boys were instantly at work picking and eating them. It must be enchanting up there on a bright day. The family don't live there, though the house is comfortable, but go out with the children on holidays. We were obliged to have tea indoors, as the weather was not propitious for tea in the garden, and came home loaded with big branches of mimosa and violets and a basket filled with oranges and mandarins. Now that the governor-general has come back, the palace, with the gates always open and two red-cloaked spahis on the sentry-boxes, looks very imposing. There are constantly officers and orderlies riding in and out. The other day we saw an Arab coming out, sitting straight but loosely in his saddle and riding with such a long slack rein, we wondered how he would ever pass the motors and trams that take up almost all the street, but I suppose the horses are well trained and can be trusted to find their way. All the horses here look in good condition, though not quite so round and well fed as those I saw in Alsace.

I would like to see some of the big Arab chiefs in their costumes. We met one to-day—Ben S., almost a Parisian; he is a French officer educated at St.-Cyr, was in all the war, and a prisoner in Germany. He was dressed in a sort of uniform—a khaki big coat, but a white turban with the band of yellow camel's hair that denotes a certain rank. The camel's hair was such a bright color it looked like gold. Charlotte and I walked about a little to-day in one of the Jewish streets, rue de la Lyre. It was interesting to see the different types. There were a great many Arabs walking about as well as Jews, but the Arabs are certainly a much finer race. In one of the squares a public writer was seated on a doorstep, a young Arab dictating a letter to him. Cobblers were at work in little dark doorways. In many of the shops, as carnival is approaching, there were masks and spangled veils and scarfs and skirts. The quarter has a perfectly different aspect from the modern shopping streets we usually frequent. There are many flights of steep steps leading up to the Kasbah, the old Arab town, and little dark, narrow, sinister-looking alleys where certainly never a ray of sunshine penetrates.

We had a foretaste of carnival the other day when we were sitting in the garden. We heard the tum-tumming of a native instrument in the distance and then a band of Arabs presented themselves at the gate—two men and five or six children, the men wearing white burnooses and turbans, the children one scanty garment only, which barely covered them. One of the men played, on a curious instrument looking rather like a long pipe, a strange irregular rhythm and the other danced, if dancing it can be called. He twirled round and round, occasionally making a leap into the air, until we were quite dizzy watching him. They were satisfied with the few pennies we gave them, bowed low, making a fine sweeping gesture with their open hands, and moved on to the next place.

We made a lovely excursion the other day with some English friends in their big touring-car, to Blidah and the Gorges de la Chiffa. It was an interesting road, so perfectly Eastern, orange and lemon groves, cactus hedges, oueds (beds of dried-up rivers with a narrow stream of water running down the middle), long stretches of vine-covered plains, the vines quite low now but in another month they will be high and green. In many of the orange groves the oranges have already been picked; we saw a few gleaming among the leaves. The Blidah oranges are famous all over the world, and are exported in great quantities. Blidah is interesting, a real Arab town. The market-place was full of Arabs squatting on the pavement or on their prayer-rugs. There were plenty of people in the streets, not many uniforms, although there is a French garrison there, and it is considered one of the most attractive posts in Africa.

There seemed to be good shops in the streets. I didn't see anything like a place where Europeans could live. C. says there is a boulevard outside the town where there are good modern houses but we didn't go through it. The road along the Chiffa is wonderful, very good, very narrow, with every now and then a sort of refuge or bay hanging over the precipice to let people pass. We passed a few motors and always the Biblical groups of Arabs and donkeys, the old men riding and the women walking behind. The mountains are high, almost shutting out the daylight, generally masses of rock, but sometimes quite green with trees and bushes, every now and then a torrent tumbling down the slope. We had brought our lunch with us.

We heard the cannon after breakfast to-day—still a sinister sound, though we knew that it was to tell us that the new President was installed at the Elysée. He has a difficult succession. Poincaré bore himself with great dignity and patriotism during all the war years, never spared himself, never doubted one moment that France would win though at a frightful cost of life, but he had a terrible responsibility and will go down to posterity "Le Président de la Guerre," just as Thiers was known after "70" as "Le Libérateur du Territoire." He was so right too to take his place again as senator. With his intelligence and experience he can do much good as an outsider whose decisions would be perfectly impartial. He has nothing to gain; he has had all his country could give him.

Monday, April 19th.

We are having a series of beautiful days and are never in the house except to eat and sleep; the air is delicious, warm in the sun but always a slight breeze, which makes a light wrap necessary for the evening. Yesterday I had a most interesting afternoon. The Jeans came for me in their car and we went to Notre Dame d'Afrique, the church which stands so high on the hills and is seen from a great distance at sea. The route was beautiful, always on the high plains that run along the slope of the mountain, with lovely views of the sea at our feet, the road very good, narrow, and twisting with very sharp turns. I had never been in that quarter before and was astonished at the number of houses—almost all pretty little Moorish villas hidden in the trees, their white walls gleaming through the thick branches. The road was very steep, the church looked inaccessible but wasn't, as several horse carriages were toiling patiently up the hill. The last bit looked like a stone wall ending in nothing apparently; we seemed to be driving straight up into a blue space of sea and sky; however, just at the top a sharp turn brought us into the little square just in front of the church.

Quite on the edge of the cliff facing the sea is the tomb and white marble cross in memory of Cardinal Lavigerie (though he is not buried there but at Constantine), who loved Africa and with his Pères Blancs did so much for the country.

It was almost dark in the church. I could hardly see at first, coming in from the bright sunlight outside, but as I got accustomed to the half light I made out the famous black Virgin very well. She stands very high, dressed in bright-blue draperies, a gold crown on her head and her black face quite distinct. Tapers were burning on each side of the altar and people kneeling before the "Mère Consolatrice qui prie pour nous et pour les

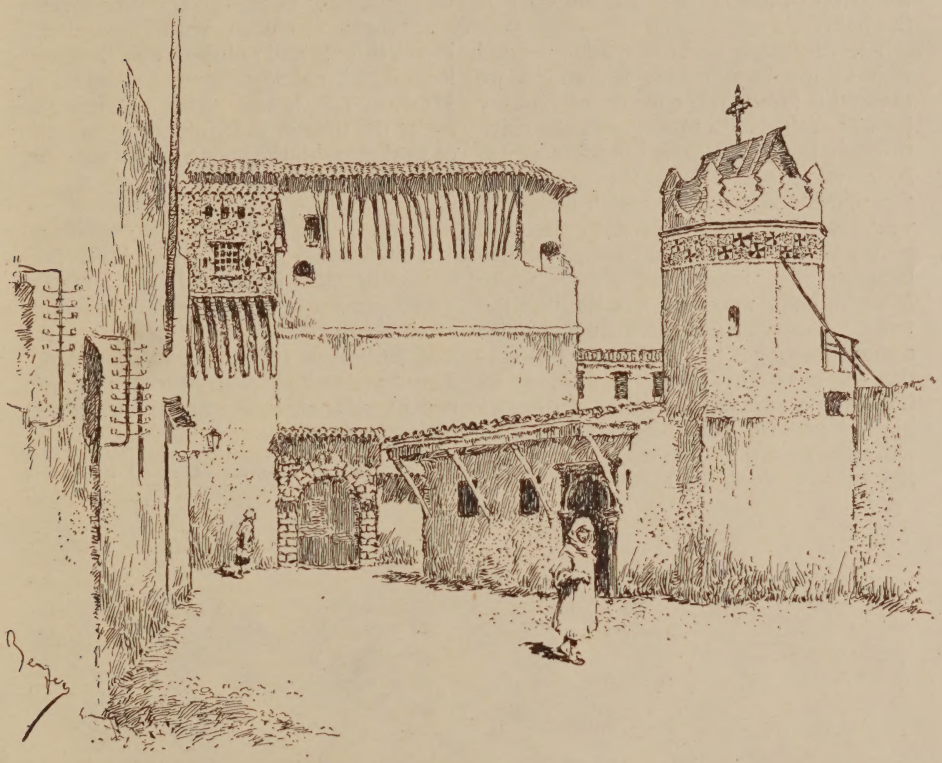
Mussulmans." All the walls were covered with inscriptions and tablets from grateful travellers who had escaped from the perils of the sea, the desert, and attacks from wandering bands of natives. Some of them were pathetic in their simplicity. We came home by another road, steep and narrow and twisting like the one we came up by, but quite enchanting—color, light everywhere.

We saw three or four really handsome young Jewesses with beautiful soft dark eyes and pale smooth skin but always with the marked features of their race and already a tendency to grow fat (all the women get fat in Alger as they grow older); they were generally richly dressed in silk and embroidered skirts, a bright-colored cashmere shawl on their shoulders, and always the black silk band, low on their foreheads drawn tightly around their heads; they wear a great many ornaments, long gold earrings and brooches, and clasps of gold. The men dress like the Arabs (they don't look at all like them) in long caftans, white turbans around the red fez. One or two women were walking about with red and yellow silk handkerchiefs on their heads and loose jackets of very vivid colors, bright green and orange. I saw for the first time an Arab with a blond drooping mustache; he was not quite fair but not nearly so dark as all I have seen here —might easily have passed for an Italian or Spanish bronzed by the southern sun; I should think he must have some foreign blood in his veins. There have been many marriages with white women.

We have been reading an interesting book on the Sahara and Alger written by a Russian woman who lived years in the desert, died there, and is buried in one of the small Arab villages on the borders of the Sahara. It was a fantastic life, she wore man's dress, served in a spahis' regiment, and lived for a long time with a "Sidi Mohammed Quelconque" in the desert. Her descriptions of the roaming wild life, the space, the solitude, the stillness of the desert are quite wonderful. Some of the chapters describing the forming and the starting of a trans-Saharienne caravan, hours of lonely waiting in a small oasis in the heart of the desert dreading an attack from a fierce hostile tribe, all so vivid that through it all one feels the love of this great African continent and the mysterious depths of the Sahara.

Nanette, who has lived here now for some years, is most interesting when she talks about the Arabs and their customs. She went the other day to the harem of one of the big Arab chiefs, Ben S., who was marrying his daughter, and a few foreign ladies, including Mme. A., the wife of the governor-general, had been asked to the ceremony. They were met at the entrance by a French general and the master of the house, Ben S., and taken into an inner court; then the men disappeared and the ladies penetrated into the inner rooms. In one large salon all the family except the bride were assembled from the old grandmother down to the various babies rolling about the floors! The Arab ladies were seated on divans and cushions, there were chairs for the foreigners, and on a mat or bit of carpet in front were three musicians with their curious instruments and still more curious music, long drawn-out notes and a very marked irregular rhythm. The Arab ladies were very richly dressed in baggy silk trousers, silk shirts or vests embroidered in gold, and a sort of jacket or coat of bright color, also embroidered in gold and silver, white veils, some spangled with gold and quantities of jewels, the pearls all baroque, not the beautiful white pearls we wear in the West. Some of the ladies spoke French a little, made very halting efforts at conversation. Coffee and sweets were handed around but time went slowly. Then there was a move, some of the ladies including the foreigners went up-stairs to see the bride, who had not yet made her appearance. They waited some little time in a salon furnished with divans and cushions like the down-stairs rooms, at one end an armchair with three or four cushions so that the occupant would sit very high as if on a throne. Finally, the bride appeared—a girl of about fourteen led in by her grandmother, the oldest person present. She was most elaborately dressed—her coat was of light-blue velvet thick with gold embroideries, her veil white and spangled, she wore a great many jewels, diamonds on her head and

bits of gold in the shape of moon and stars on her forehead and cheeks. As soon as she was settled in her chair her jewel-box of wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl was brought in and deposited on the floor at her feet; she used it as a footstool —that is the way the bride takes possession of her jewels. She didn't talk much, smiled and nodded an answer to some of the foreign ladies' remarks, and they very soon took their leave.



Alger.—The entrance of the Palace of the Kasbah.

Thursday, May 6th.

We are leading the most curious life of complete isolation from the rest of the world except for the meagre and unsatisfactory telegrams in the Algerian papers, which tell us that the strike is not yet finished but that the situation is improving. In the meantime traffic and business are at a standstill. No steamer has left or come into Alger since last Saturday, we have no letters nor papers from France. Yesterday a steamer half-cargo half-passenger left for Marseilles with eight hundred passengers, very little accommodation or food. One of Francis's friends had a mattress which he could put on deck or in one of the passages. When the boat went out her deck was black with passengers all standing packed like sardines. All the Algerian trains are stopped.

We have had two or three very trying days, a very strong north wind, a mistral of unusual vigor—of course here at the top of the hill we get it in full force. Certainly this country is *violent* in all its expression when it blows hard. Doors and windows rattle, panes break, the tall

eucalyptus-trees in the garden sway and bend as if they were going to break in two, and the wind howls around the house as if we were at sea. When the rain begins it falls in straight black sheets, the drops so big that they seem like black pebbles striking against the windows. When the sun comes out it shined down so straight and hard out of the cloudless blue sky that we can hardly bear the intensity of the light.

This afternoon we have made a second visit to the farm of M. R., and if we thought it lovely in the month of January it was fairyland to-day. The drive through the village and outskirts of El-Biar was enchanting, through green twisting lanes, sometimes high hedges of wild roses bordering the road, sometimes gray walls with masses of pink geraniums hanging over them, and always white Moorish houses peeping out through the trees. The avenue of palms made quite a shade as we got to the house. The garden was charming, masses of flowers and bushes of all kinds, quantities of roses as big as peonies and some tall slender papyrus-trees that reminded one of all the Bible pictures of Moses in the bulrushes. The mimosas are over but we walked through an avenue of nèfles,* the little yellow apples looking like gold balls in the sun and at the end a long sweep of vines stretching away to the horizon. Again, as so often here, we had such a sense of space. After making the tour of the garden we went to see the cellars where they make their wine. Everything was spotlessly clean—all the wine-presses and their machines with their brass knobs shining and polished, and the floors looked as if nobody ever walked on them. Mme. L. said it was really something to see at the time of the vintage—quantities of workmen, all the big machines working, and tons of grapes.

May 29th.

I am leaving now in a few days. My winter in Alger is finished; perhaps next year I can get to the Sahara and the limit of civilized life. I should like to see the long unbroken stretches of yellow sand. I say "yellow" in spite of Fromentin, who never used that word. For him the desert plains were golden.

*I don't know what they are in English, I think custard apples.